



Press Release
September 26, 2011

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION ISSUES ADVISORY OPINIONS

At its meeting today, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued four advisory opinions related to potential conflicts of interest.

The first opinion related to potential fundraising for a Mt. Everest climbing expedition as part of the City of Columbus Bicentennial celebration events. The Executive Director of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District may join the climbing team and requested guidance regarding expedition sponsorship. In the opinion, the Commission determined that because individual team members of the expedition would benefit from financial sponsorship, the team cannot accept contributions from private and corporate sponsors who are doing or seeking to do business with, regulated by, or interested in matters before the Metro Parks. Further, the opinion concludes that the Columbus Bicentennial Commission can provide funds for programs and activities even if the Mt. Everest team participates provided that the programs are part of the general observance of the Bicentennial and that the Metro Parks Executive Director does not benefit from the contributions.

A separate advisory opinion issued to the Ohio Department of Education determined that a public school district superintendent, treasurer, or other employee of a district that is sponsoring a conversion community school cannot serve on the board of directors of the community school or provide services to the community school under a contract with the district, unless he or she is acting in his or her official capacity as a representative of the district. Further, the Commission noted that superintendents, treasurers or school employees generally cannot serve as an employee of the community school sponsored by the district unless specific exceptions are met under the law.

The Commission also issued an advisory opinion to YouthBuild Columbus Community School, a dropout recovery high school that allows students to work towards a diploma while learning residential construction or nursing skills. The opinion stated that properties built and rehabilitated by the students and eventually offered for sale cannot be listed and sold by a real estate broker who serves as a board member for the community school.

The final opinion was issued to the Ohio State Racing Commission (ORSC) and advised that ORSC Commissioners or employees may only attend events sponsored by the horse racing industry if the Commissioners or employees pay the ticket or admission charge. The opinion further states that the Commissioners or employees attending meetings at racetracks may accept refreshments provided by race track owners only if the refreshments are nominal in character.

In other business, the Commission reviewed Financial Disclosure statistics and complaint reports and received an update on Commission public outreach and communication efforts. Finally, in executive session, the Commission heard a confidential report on complaints and pending investigations concerning alleged violations of the Ethics Law and related statutes and litigation.